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Fantastic Four®

40th Wedding Anniversary Special

Kesel • Johnson — Lee • Kirby

Fantastic Four

40th Wedding Anniversary Special

A celebration of 40 years of marriage for Marvel's finest couple

The Life Fantastic

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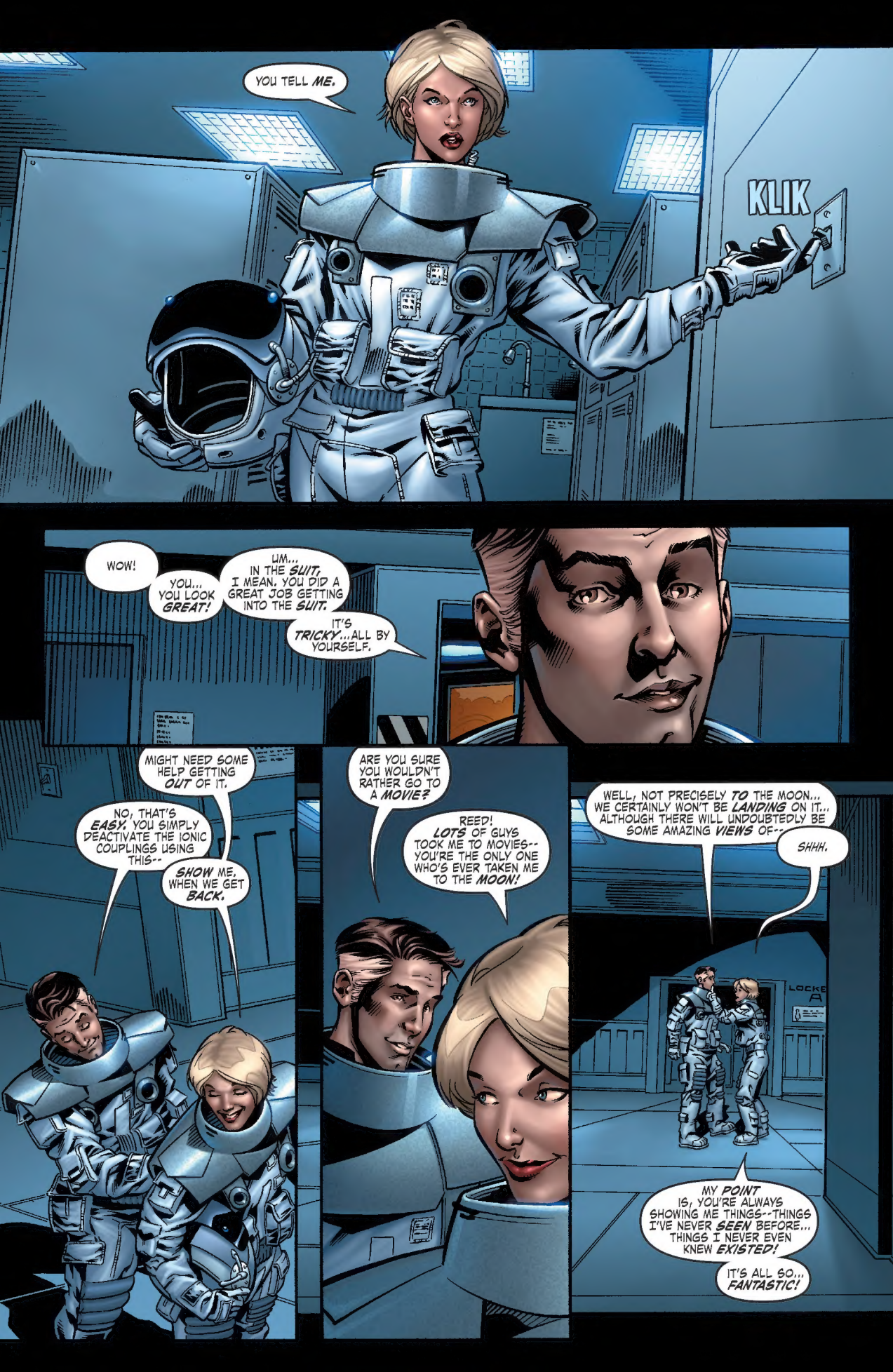
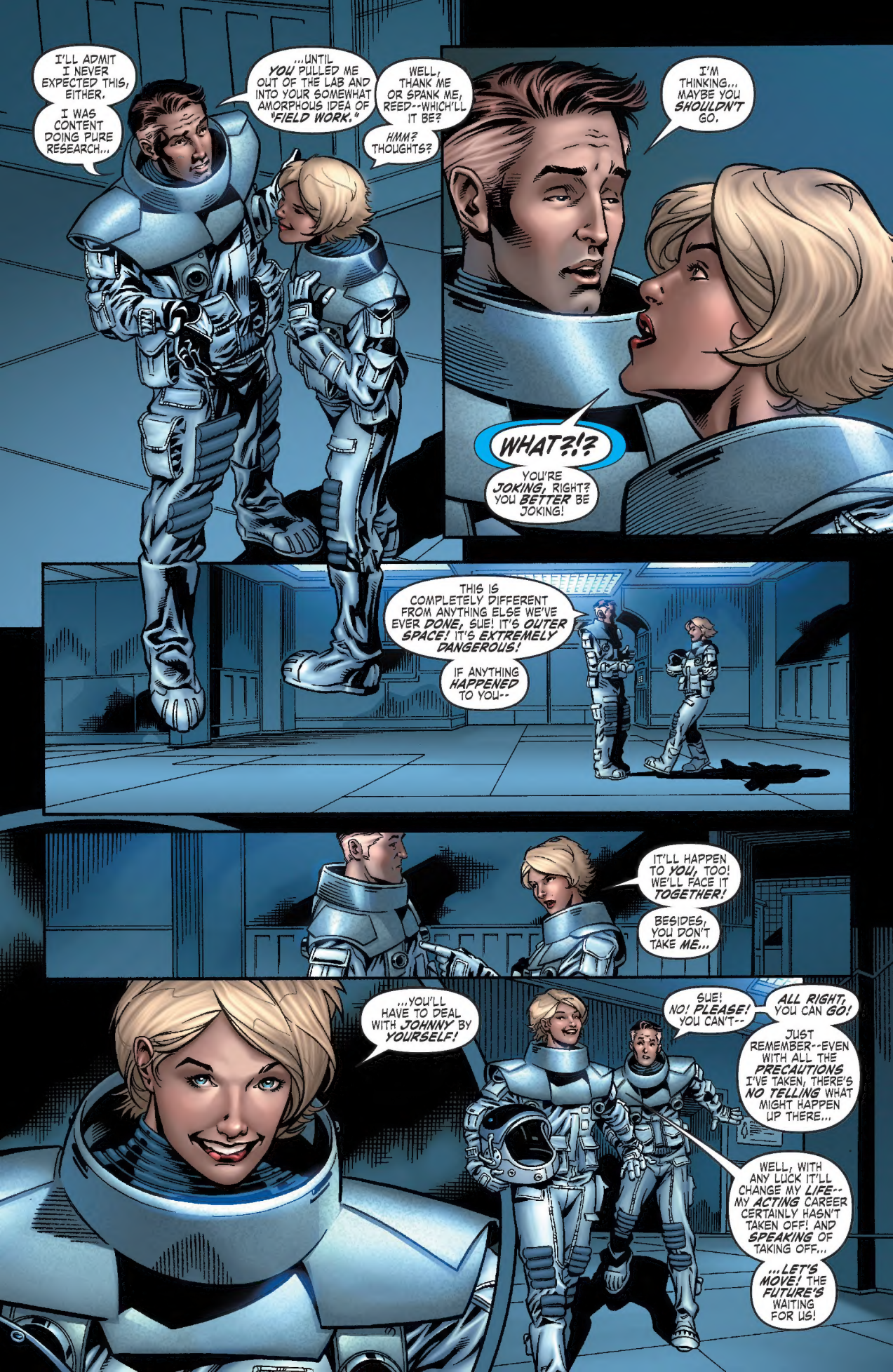
SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE CENTRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA.
ONCE UPON A TIME...
SUE?
HEY-- SIS!
YOU COMING? BETTER HURRY! WE'RE ALL SET!
SHOULD SEE ME SUITED UP! I, LIKE, TOTALLY ROCK!
SUE?
GROUND CONTROL TO LADIES LOCKER ROOM! CAN YOU HEAR ME IN--
LOCKER
THEY CAN HEAR YA CLEAR TA YANCY STREET, KID!
FUNNY THING ABOUT SECRET MISSIONS-- BEST WAY TA KEEP 'EM SECRET IS TA KEEP QUIET!
MHRMFF?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BEN-- SECURITY'S BUSY ELSEWHERE. ALL AUTOMATED SYSTEMS ARE GO. WHY DON'T YOU HELP JOHNNY INTO HIS ROCKET SEAT?
BHF HM HUHD--
MY PLEASURE, REED. I'LL MAKE SURE HE'S STRAPPED IN REAL TIGHT!
HEY! LEGGO, YA BIG GORILLA! THINK I'LL GET LOST?
I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY...
SUE?
ARE YOU READY?


YOU TELL ME.
KLIK
WOW!
YOU... YOU LOOK GREAT!
UM... IN THE SUIT, I MEAN. YOU DID A GREAT JOB GETTING INTO THE SUIT.
IT'S TRICKY...ALL BY YOURSELF.
MIGHT NEED SOME HELP GETTING OUT OF IT.
NO, THAT'S EASY. YOU SIMPLY DEACTIVATE THE IONIC COUPLINGS USING THIS--
SHOW ME, WHEN WE GET BACK.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WOULDN'T RATHER GO TO A MOVIE?
REED! LOTS OF GUYS TOOK ME TO MOVIES--YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S EVER TAKEN ME TO THE MOON!
WELL, NOT PRECISELY TO THE MOON... WE CERTAINLY WON'T BE LANDING ON IT... ALTHOUGH THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE SOME AMAZING VIEWS OF--
SHHH.
LOCKE A
MY POINT IS, YOU'RE ALWAYS SHOWING ME THINGS--THINGS I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE... THINGS I NEVER EVEN KNEW EXISTED!
IT'S ALL SO... FANTASTIC!


I'LL ADMIT I NEVER EXPECTED THIS, EITHER.
I WAS CONTENT DOING PURE RESEARCH...
...UNTIL *YOU* PULLED ME OUT OF THE LAB AND INTO YOUR SOMEWHAT AMORPHOUS IDEA OF "*FIELD WORK.*"
WELL, THANK ME OR SPANK ME, REED--WHICH'LL IT BE?
HMM? THOUGHTS?
I'M THINKING... MAYBE YOU *SHOULDN'T* GO.
WHAT?!?
YOU'RE *JOKING*, RIGHT? YOU *BETTER* BE JOKING!
THIS IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING ELSE WE'VE EVER *DONE*, SUE! IT'S *OUTER SPACE!* IT'S *EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!*
IF ANYTHING *HAPPENED* TO YOU--
IT'LL HAPPEN TO *YOU*, TOO! WE'LL FACE IT *TOGETHER!*
BESIDES, YOU DON'T TAKE *ME*...
...YOU'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH *JOHNNY* BY *YOURSELF!*
SUE! *NO! PLEASE!* YOU CAN'T--
ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN *GO!*
JUST REMEMBER--EVEN WITH ALL THE *PRECAUTIONS* I'VE TAKEN, THERE'S *NO TELLING* WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN UP THERE...
WELL, WITH ANY LUCK IT'LL CHANGE MY *LIFE*--MY *ACTING* CAREER CERTAINLY HASN'T TAKEN OFF! AND *SPEAKING* OF TAKING OFF...
...*LET'S MOVE!* THE *FUTURE'S* WAITING FOR US!

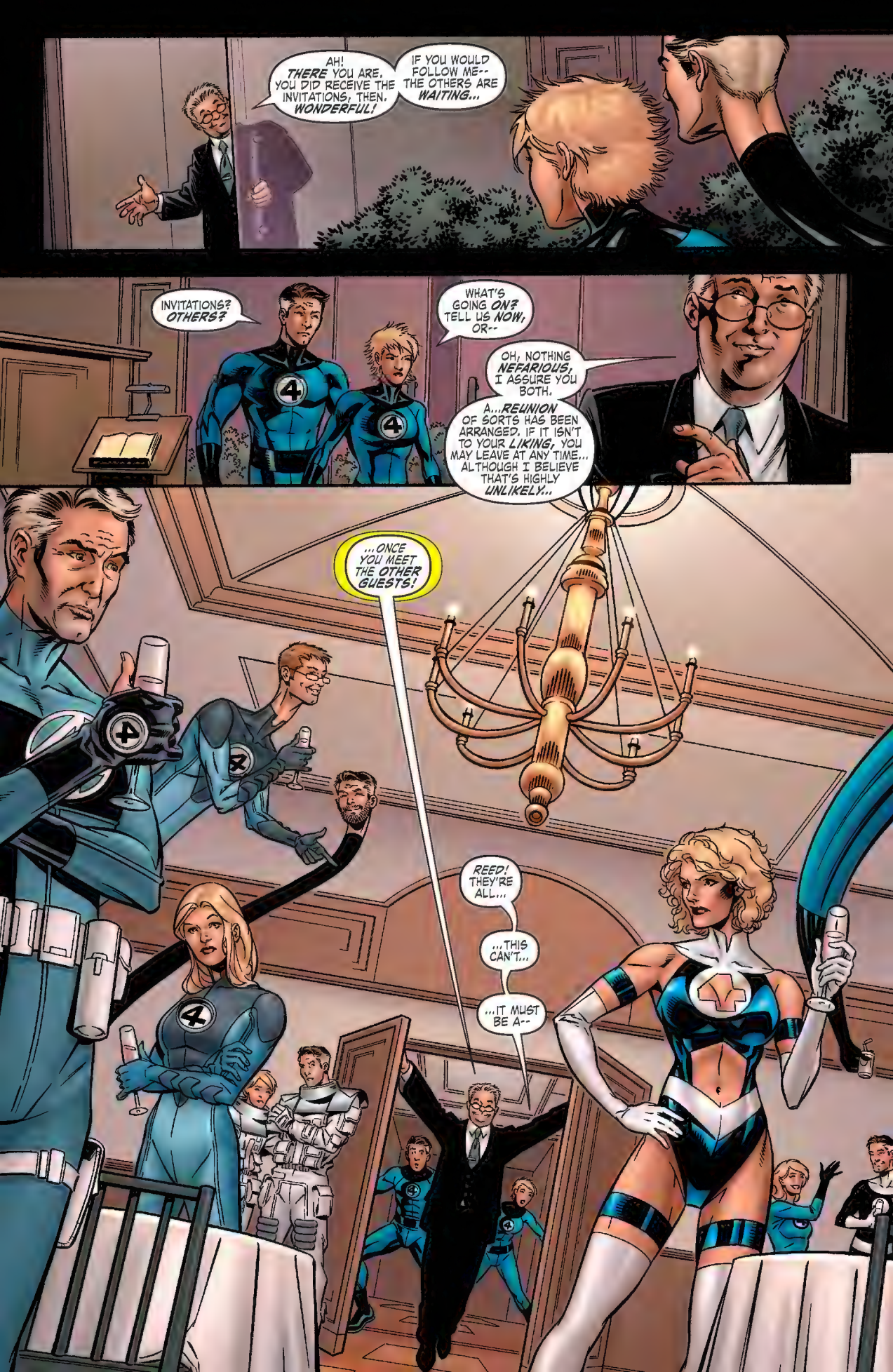
PRESENT DAY.
BEN! WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?
IT'S VAL, SUZIE! SHE WANTS HER FAV'RITE TOY--AN' WE CAN'T FIND IT!
LOOK, VAL-- A DRAGON AND A... FLAME-THINGY!
THOUGHT SHE LIKES DRAGONS, FRANKLIN?
SHE LIKES DRAGON MAN, UNCLE JOHNNY!
MOST TIMES...
WAAAHHH!
GENTLEMEN-- WATCH HOW THE PROFESSIONALS DO IT. FIRST--MAKE ALL EXTRANEOUS OBJECTS INVISIBLE...
THERE IT IS. REED--?
MY PLEASURE, SUE. AFTER ALL, AT THIS RATE...
gha!
...OUR LITTLE GIRL WILL BE PLAYING CHESS BY THE TIME SHE'S TWO!

SEE? THAT WASN'T SO DIFFICU--
=SNFF=
IS SOMETHING BURNING?
THE HOT DOGS!!
DON'T WORRY!
I GOT IT!
EVERYTHING'S--
YOW!
EVERY-THING'S UNDER CONTROL!
UM...
WEENIES, ANYONE?
I'M GOING TO MY ROOM NOW. I'LL RELAX, READ A BOOK...MAYBE TAKE A BATH.
BECAUSE THE BEST PART ABOUT YOU DESTROYING THIS PLACE MORE OFTEN THAN GODZILLA IN TOKYO IS KNOWING YOU'VE ALL GOTTEN VERY GOOD AT PUTTING IT BACK TOGETHER!

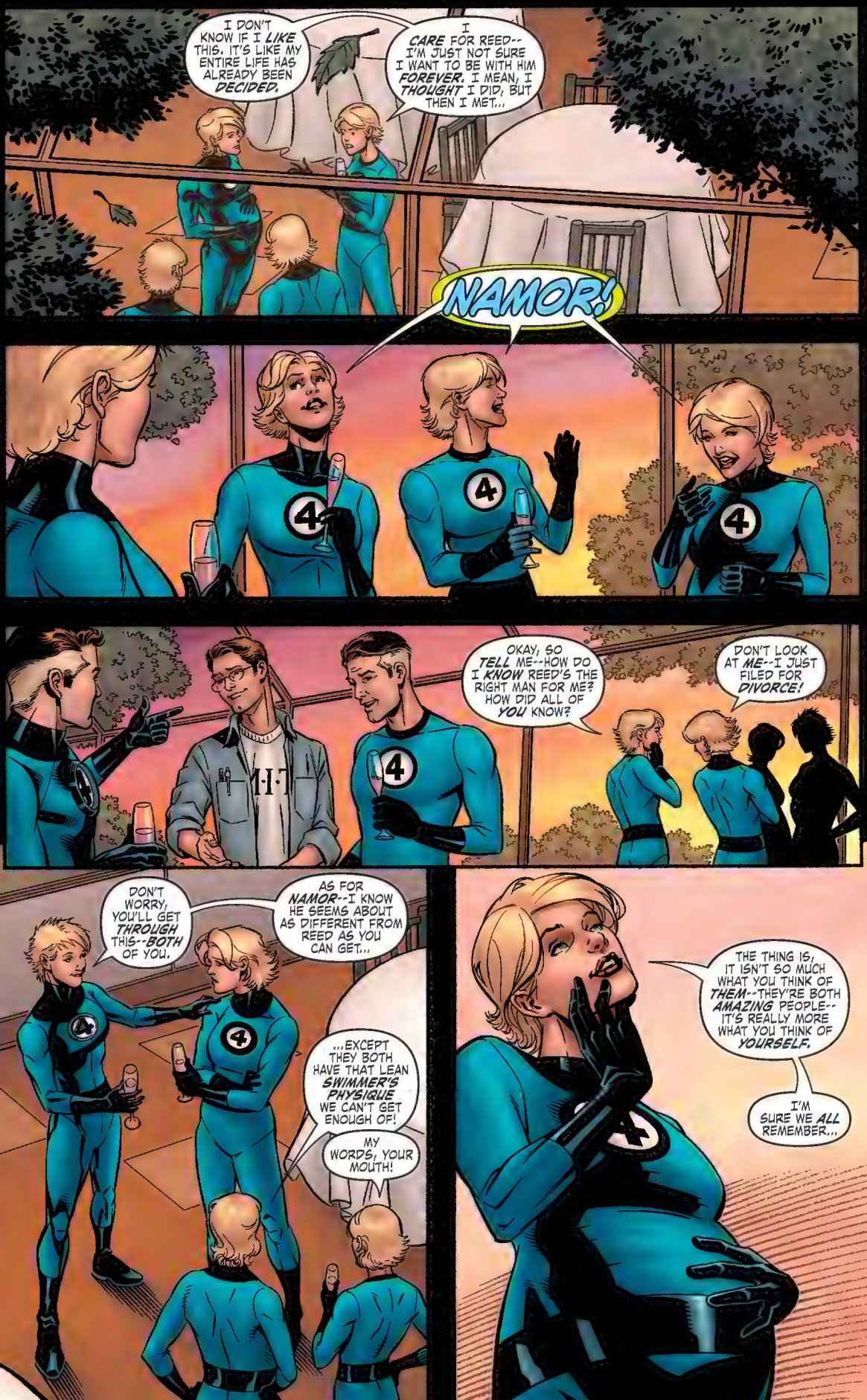
=SIGH=
?
PRESS
Your presence is requested for a special night out with your husband. You deserve it.
-R

--THANK YOU AND BLACK BOLT FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR CHILDREN ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, MEDUSA.
NOT TO MENTION JOHNNY AND BEN.
MY HUSBAND AND I OFTEN CONSIDER ALL FOUR OF THEM YOUR CHILDREN, SUSAN.
AND YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY IS ALWAYS WELCOME IN NEW ATTILAN.
THE INHUMANS CERTAINLY HAVE MADE A WONDERFUL HOME FOR THEMSELVES HERE. IT'S ALMOST HARD TO BELIEVE THERE WAS ONCE AN ANCIENT, RUINED CITY ON THIS LOCATION.
OURS WAS CONSTRUCTED IN HONOR OF THAT FIRST SETTLEMENT, REED--AND IT SHALL EVER LIVE ON IN THE MEMORIES OF THOSE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE VISITED THE MOON'S BEGUILING BLUE AREA WHILE ITS ABANDONED STRUCTURES YET STOOD SILENT AS SENTINELS.
YES. VERY SPECIAL MEMORIES...
WHICH REMINDS ME--WE HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE GREATEST CITY ON EARTH.
EXCUSE OUR SUDDEN DEPARTURE, YOUR EXCELLENCIES--BUT IF YOU THINK FINDING A HOMELAND FOR YOUR PEOPLE WAS DIFFICULT...

"...YOU'VE NEVER TRIED TO GET A LAST-MINUTE RESERVATION AT TAVERN ON THE GREEN!"
IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE WE GOT OUT LIKE THIS.
COULDN'T AGREE MORE, REED. ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR BRILLIANT IDEAS...
MY IDEA? I THOUGHT IT WAS YOURS.
THERE WAS THAT NOTE IN MY LAB, IN YOUR HANDWRITING, WRITTEN WITH DISAPPEARING INK...
SINCE WHEN HAVE I USED DISAPPEARING INK?
I... I THOUGHT YOU WERE TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT--LIKE ONE OF YOUR NEW COSTUMES OR HAIRSTYLES?
AND SO A SIMPLE EVENING OUT IS REVEALED TO BE A SUPER-VILLAIN'S TRAP...AGAIN!
SAD TO SAY, I LEARNED LONG AGO TO ALWAYS CARRY SPARE UNIFORMS...
ACTUALLY, I'M NOT CERTAIN IT IS A TRAP.
SOMETHING DOESN'T ADD UP. IT COULD BE A SURPRISE PARTY--ALTHOUGH I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE OCCASION WOULD BE.
SUITING UP MIGHT BE AN OVER-REACTION...AND IT DEFINITELY TIPS OUR HAND...THEN AGAIN, IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO BE PREPARED...
REED, DARLING...
"...THERE'S A REASON I'M CALLED THE INVISIBLE WOMAN!"
EXCELLENT. YOU TURNING US INVISIBLE HAS PREVENTED US FROM BEING DETECTED SO--

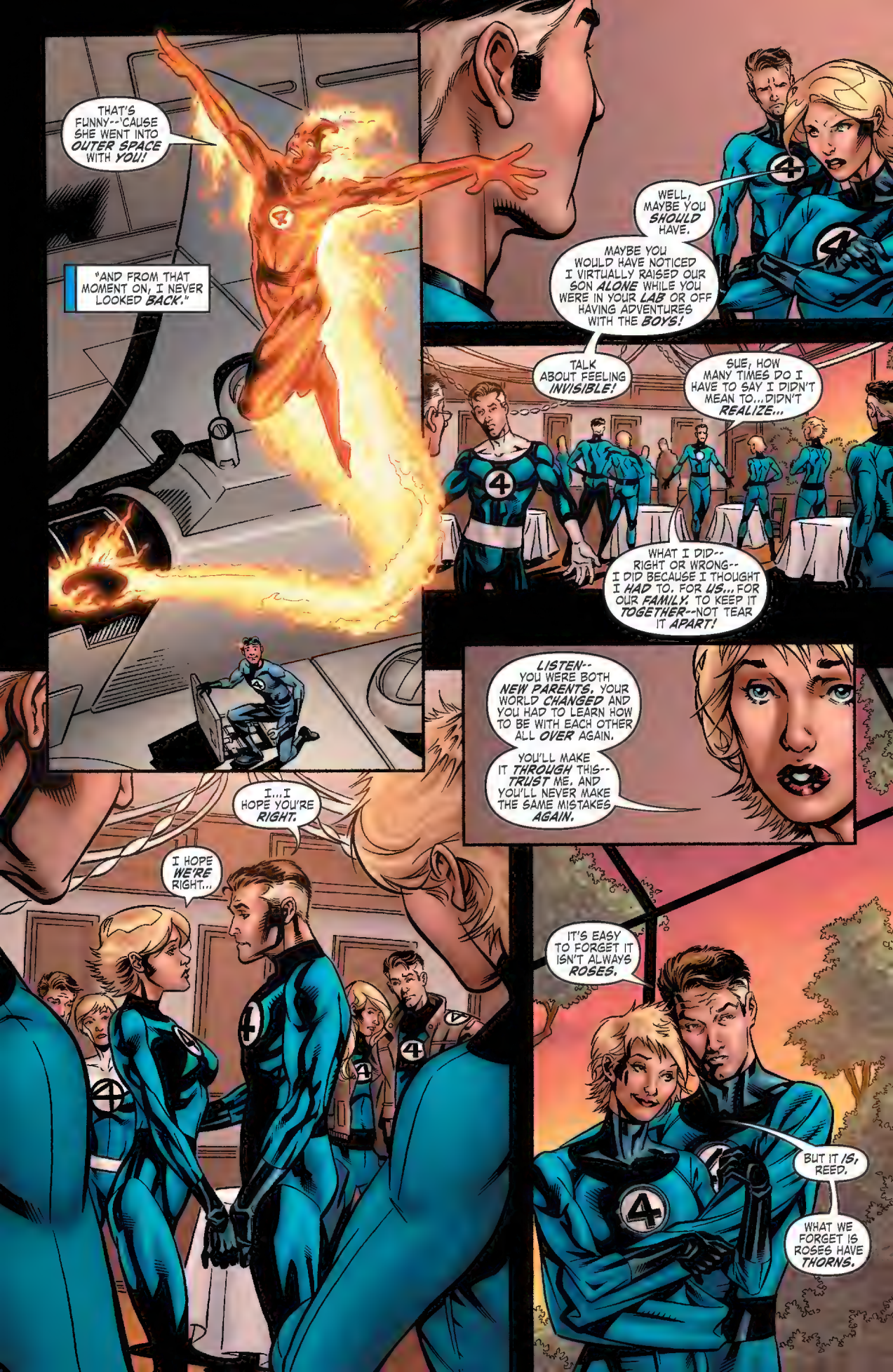

AH! THERE YOU ARE. YOU DID RECEIVE THE INVITATIONS, THEN. WONDERFUL!
IF YOU WOULD FOLLOW ME-- THE OTHERS ARE WAITING...
INVITATIONS? OTHERS?
WHAT'S GOING ON? TELL US NOW, OR--
OH, NOTHING NEFARIOUS, I ASSURE YOU BOTH.
A...REUNION OF SORTS HAS BEEN ARRANGED. IF IT ISN'T TO YOUR LIKING, YOU MAY LEAVE AT ANY TIME... ALTHOUGH I BELIEVE THAT'S HIGHLY UNLIKELY...
...ONCE YOU MEET THE OTHER GUESTS!
REED! THEY'RE ALL...
...THIS CAN'T...
...IT MUST BE A--

TRAP? NEXUS OF REALITIES? ILLUSION? PRACTICAL JOKE? I'VE ALREADY CONSIDERED EVERY POSSIBLE SCENARIO AND I'VE RUN ALL CONCEIVABLE TESTS AND SCANS WITH MY HYPERGLOVE, BELIEVE ME!
THIS ACTUALLY IS EXACTLY WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE...
...A GATHERING OF MYSELF AND SUE FROM VARIOUS POINTS IN OUR LIVES! ASTOUNDING!
YOU REALLY BELIEVE THIS GUY?
ONLY BECAUSE THE HYPERGLOVE IS AN IDEA I'VE HAD IN MIND FOR SOME TIME--THE OPERATIVE WORDS BEING "IN MIND." NO ONE ELSE KNOWS ABOUT IT.
THERE ARE WAYS THAT COULD BE FOUND OUT, OF COURSE, BUT FOR NOW I SUGGEST WE PLAY ALONG... AND STAY ALERT.
PERSONALLY, THE BEST PART TO THIS IS THAT I SEE I EVENTUALLY GET MY EYE AND HAND BACK! THAT'S QUITE SATISFYING TO KNOW, EVEN IF ONLY TEMPORARILY...
...SINCE NONE OF US REMEMBERS COMING HERE, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE'VE ATTENDED. YES--OUR MEMORIES MUST END UP ERASED, SOMEHOW.
WHICH MEANS WE CAN ALL LEARN ABOUT OUR FUTURES WITH IMPUNITY!
THIS COULDN'T BE BETTER IF I PLANNED IT MYSELF--WHICH, HOPEFULLY, I DID!


I DON'T KNOW IF I LIKE THIS. IT'S LIKE MY ENTIRE LIFE HAS ALREADY BEEN DECIDED.
I CARE FOR REED--I'M JUST NOT SURE I WANT TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER. I MEAN, I THOUGHT I DID, BUT THEN I MET...
NAMOR!
OKAY, SO TELL ME--HOW DO I KNOW REED'S THE RIGHT MAN FOR ME? HOW DID ALL OF YOU KNOW?
DON'T LOOK AT ME--I JUST FILED FOR DIVORCE!
DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL GET THROUGH THIS--BOTH OF YOU.
AS FOR NAMOR--I KNOW HE SEEMS ABOUT AS DIFFERENT FROM REED AS YOU CAN GET...
...EXCEPT THEY BOTH HAVE THAT LEAN SWIMMER'S PHYSIQUE WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF!
MY WORDS, YOUR MOUTH!
THE THING IS, IT ISN'T SO MUCH WHAT YOU THINK OF THEM--THEY'RE BOTH AMAZING PEOPLE--IT'S REALLY MORE WHAT YOU THINK OF YOURSELF.
I'M SURE WE ALL REMEMBER...

"...THE DAY WE FINALLY FIGURED THAT OUT."
--FANTASTIC FOUR REPELLED THE INVADING ARMY OF ATLANTIS, LED BY THEIR NEWLY-CROWNED PRINCE NAMOR--ALSO KNOWN AS THE QUICK-TEMPERED SUB-MARINER!
CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS REPORT THE SUB-MARINER BOTH KIDNAPPING AND SAVING THE LIFE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S SCINTILLATING SUE STORM...
HEY--YOU OKAY, SUZIE?
HMM?
OH, I'M FINE, BEN. JUST... THINKING ABOUT NAMOR...
YOU KNOW, WHEN I FIRST MET HIM HE WAS LOST, ALONE... ADRIFT. AS POWERFULLY PROUD AS HE WAS--AND STILL IS--I COULD SEE HOW DEEPLY THAT LONELINESS HURT HIM.
AND I WANTED WITH ALL MY HEART TO HELP HEAL THAT WOUND.
BUT NOW NAMOR'S BACK WITH HIS PEOPLE. HE RULES AN UNDERWATER EMPIRE...AND WANTS TO SHARE HIS THRONE WITH ME. AND THAT'S FLATTERING AND THRILLING AND--
AND THEN I THINK OF REED AND...
...AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.

REED AIN'T ROYALTY, SUZIE-- NEVER WILL BE--AND HE DON'T WEAR HIS HEART ON HIS SLEEVE LIKE NAMOR...
...BUT STILL WATERS RUN DEEP, AN' IF YA THINK HE DON'T LOVE YA TA PIECES-- YER NUTS.
THERE'S JUST ONE QUESTION, KIDDO-- AN' ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER IT: WHEN YER TIME COMES TA WALK DOWN THAT AISLE, YA WANNA DO IT AS A QUEEN...
...'R AS A WIFE?
AND THAT'S WHEN I KNEW... WHEN WE ALL KNEW.
IN THAT INSTANT IT BECAME CRYSTAL CLEAR.
EXCUSE ME. EXPECTANT FATHER, FIRST CHILD, RIDICULOUSLY NERVOUS ANY TIME MY WIFE LEAVES MY SIGHT, SO I COULDN'T HELP OVERHEARING...
I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP, TOO.
AFTER ALL, LOVE, AS THEY SAY, IS A TWO-WAY STREET--
--AND NAMOR DROVE A MEAN MUSCLE CAR WHILE I WAS CONSTANTLY REINVENTING THE WHEEL!
SO I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SURPRISED WHEN THE PERSON WHO PUT EVERYTHING IN PERSPECTIVE FOR ME...
"...WAS SOMEONE WHO KNEW ALL ABOUT SUE AND CARS."
--SEE, SIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO SEE RIGHT THROUGH PEOPLE, Y'KNOW? LIKE, TO WHO THEY REALLY ARE?
THAT'S ALL SHE DID WITH SUBBY-- SAW SOMETHING NO ONE ELSE DID. GOT ZERO IDEA WHAT. STILL THINK IT HAS TO DO WITH HER GOLDFISH THAT DIED...
ANYWAY, SHE DOESN'T LOVE HIM. GUARANTEED. I MEAN, SHE DIDN'T GO TO ATLANTIS WITH HIM, RIGHT?
ATLANTIS IS UNDER WATER, JOHNNY.
SUE ISN'T GOING TO GO ANYWHERE SHE CAN'T BREATHE.

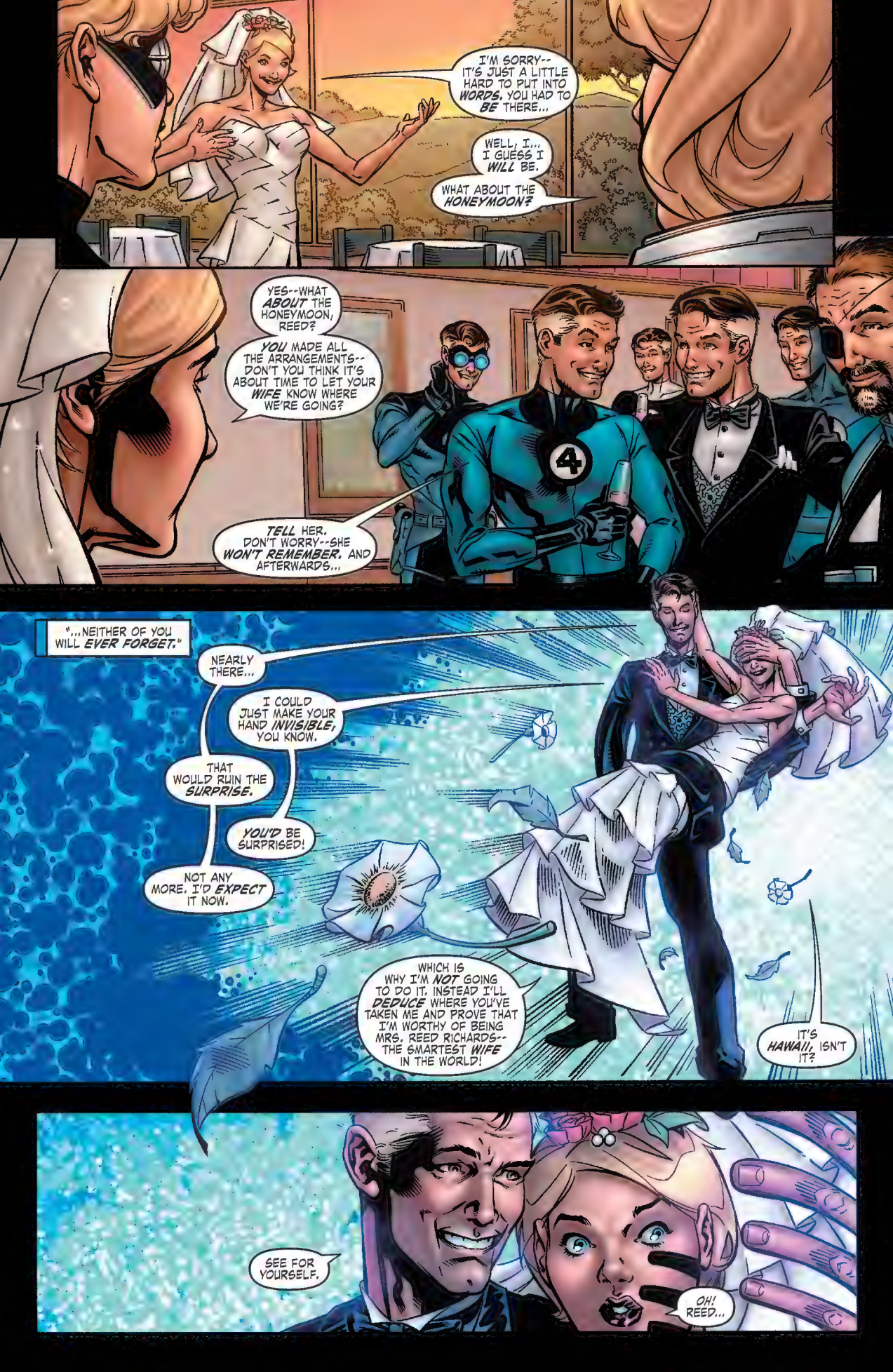

THAT'S FUNNY--'CAUSE SHE WENT INTO OUTER SPACE WITH YOU!
"AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON, I NEVER LOOKED BACK."
WELL, MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE.
MAYBE YOU WOULD HAVE NOTICED I VIRTUALLY RAISED OUR SON ALONE WHILE YOU WERE IN YOUR LAB OR OFF HAVING ADVENTURES WITH THE BOYS!
TALK ABOUT FEELING INVISIBLE!
SUE, HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY I DIDN'T MEAN TO...DIDN'T REALIZE...
WHAT I DID--RIGHT OR WRONG--I DID BECAUSE I THOUGHT I HAD TO. FOR US...FOR OUR FAMILY. TO KEEP IT TOGETHER--NOT TEAR IT APART!
LISTEN--YOU WERE BOTH NEW PARENTS. YOUR WORLD CHANGED AND YOU HAD TO LEARN HOW TO BE WITH EACH OTHER ALL OVER AGAIN.
YOU'LL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS--TRUST ME. AND YOU'LL NEVER MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES AGAIN.
I...I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
I HOPE WE'RE RIGHT...
IT'S EASY TO FORGET IT ISN'T ALWAYS ROSES.
BUT IT IS, REED.
WHAT WE FORGET IS ROSES HAVE THORNS.

THIS IS ALL SO AMAZING! I CAN'T BELIEVE WE ACTUALLY GO INTO OUTER SPACE!
GET SUPER-POWERS!
GET MARRIED!
HAVE A BABY!
A SECOND BABY!
M.I.T
GRANDCHILDREN!
YES, I HAVE TO SAY THE FAMILY TURNED OUT ALL RIGHT. NO THANKS TO ME, OF COURSE. ALL SUE'S DOING.
WHAT ABOUT BEN? DID YOU...
DO I EVER CURE HIM?
FRANK, VAL--EVEN JOHNNY, BELIEVE IT OR NOT! BECAME A BIG CELEBRITY CHEF!
OBVIOUS IN RETROSPECT--HIS AFFINITY TO FIRE AND ALL--BUT THE IDEA HAD SIMPLY NEVER OCCURRED TO ME!
AH, BEN.
WELL...

HERE WE ARE, MY DEAR! ALLOW ME TO CARRY YOU ACROSS THE THRESHOLD INTO...
...INTO...?
I KNOW-- NOT WHAT YOU WERE EXPECTING.
DON'T WORRY. THIS MAY LOOK STRANGE, BUT--
4

"STRANGE?" HA!
AFTER WHAT WE'VE JUST EXPERIENCED, THIS SEEMS ALMOST NORMAL!
NOT EVEN A ROOMFUL OF DR. DOOMS COULD SPOIL MY MOOD RIGHT NOW!
IN CASE YOU CAN'T TELL-- WE JUST GOT MARRIED!
CONGRATULATIONS!
BEST DAY OF OUR LIFE!
LUCKY MAN!
NEVER SEEN ME LOOKING MORE BEAUTIFUL!
COULDN'T BE HAPPIER!
EXCUSE ME, BUT...WHAT WAS IT LIKE? THE WEDDING-- MY WEDDING... I MEAN, YOUR WEDDING...
HEAVENLY!
HECTIC!
SO MANY PEOPLE!
SO LITTLE TIME!
MY GOD! WHEN JOHNNY--
YES! AND THEN BEN--
ALL A BLUR!
EVERY MOMENT ETCHED!
YOU'RE RIGHT-- EVERY ONE OF YOU. IT WAS ALL OF THOSE THINGS...

"...AND SO MUCH *MORE!*"


I'M SORRY--IT'S JUST A LITTLE HARD TO PUT INTO WORDS. YOU HAD TO BE THERE...
WELL, I... I GUESS I WILL BE.
WHAT ABOUT THE HONEYMOON?
YES--WHAT ABOUT THE HONEYMOON, REED?
YOU MADE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS--DON'T YOU THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME TO LET YOUR WIFE KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING?
TELL HER. DON'T WORRY--SHE WON'T REMEMBER. AND AFTERWARDS...
"...NEITHER OF YOU WILL EVER FORGET."
NEARLY THERE...
I COULD JUST MAKE YOUR HAND INVISIBLE, YOU KNOW.
THAT WOULD RUIN THE SURPRISE.
YOU'D BE SURPRISED!
NOT ANY MORE. I'D EXPECT IT NOW.
WHICH IS WHY I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT. INSTEAD I'LL DEDUCE WHERE YOU'VE TAKEN ME AND PROVE THAT I'M WORTHY OF BEING MRS. REED RICHARDS--THE SMARTEST WIFE IN THE WORLD!
IT'S HAWAII, ISN'T IT?
SEE FOR YOURSELF.
OH! REED...

...IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
IT'S NOT HAWAII--BUT I REMEMBER YOU ONCE SAID YOU WANTED TO GO TO THE MOON, AND ITS BLUE AREA HAS A BREATHABLE MICRO-CLIMATE, SO I THOUGHT...
WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE NOT DISAPPOINTED...
UATU, THE WATCHER HAS SEEN COUNTLESS EXPRESSIONS ON INNUMERABLE FACES--AND HERS IS MOST DEFINITELY NOT ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT.
WELCOME, DR. AND MRS. RICHARDS--AND CONGRATULATIONS. THE EXCHANGE OF YOUR VOWS WAS VERY...MEMORABLE, AND I WAS HONORED TO HAVE OBSERVED IT AS PART OF MY CELESTIAL DUTIES.
I AM EQUALLY HONORED THAT YOU WILL BE CELEBRATING YOUR MARRIAGE HERE, AND I TRUST YOU WILL WANT FOR NOTHING DURING YOUR STAY.
LASTLY--AS YOU KNOW, IT IS MY OBLIGATION TO BEAR SILENT WITNESS TO ALL EVENTS WITHIN MY PSYCHIC SIGHT...
...BUT WHILE YOU ARE HERE, YOU WILL BE THE ONLY THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE THAT I DO NOT WATCH. YOU HAVE UATU'S WORD.
THANK YOU, UATU--AND FOR SHARING YOUR HOME WITH US. WE ARE IN YOUR DEBT ONCE AGAIN.
AS THEY SAY ON OUR WORLD--SEE YOU LATER.

NOT IF HE SEES US FIRST! THINK ABOUT ALL THE TIMES HE WAS WATCHING US!
YES, WELL... THAT'S HIS JOB. NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT IT...UM, CERTAINLY NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT...
BESIDES, PRIVACY IS THE GREATEST GIFT A WATCHER CAN GIVE...
CERTAINLY A LOT BETTER THAN NICK FURY'S WEDDING PRESENT!
HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TOP ANTI-ESPIONAGE AGENCY AND WHAT DOES HE GIVE US? A TOASTER!
ACTUALLY, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THAT PARTICULAR TOASTER TRANSFORMS INTO A PERSONAL ANTI-MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM...
...BUT WE'RE NOT HERE TO INVENTORY GIFTS OR WRITE THANK YOU NOTES!
YOU HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND, DR. RICHARDS?
ONLY YOU, MRS. RICHARDS, AS YOU YOURSELF ONCE SAID-- FOR NOW...
...AND FOREVER!

ATTENTION! ATTENTION, EVERYONE!
I HATE TO INTERRUPT ALL THESE WONDERFUL REMINISCENCES, BUT NOW THAT WE'RE ALL HERE...
WELL-- ALMOST ALL OF US!
AND WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT, THE COUPLE THAT'S STILL MISSING IS ONLY THE MOST IMPORTANT PAIR!
GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GO TO THEM! THROUGH THESE DOORS, PLEASE...
STEP LIVELY! I DON'T TOLERATE LOLLYGAGGERS! WE MAY ALL BE GETTING OLDER AT THE SAME RATE, BUT I'VE GOT PROPORTIONATELY LESS TIME AHEAD OF ME THAN ANY OF THE REST OF YOU!
WHERE--?
IT'S STATE UNIVERSITY--MY ALMA MATER!
LOOK! THE SWEETHEART TREE!
MY GOD. WE HAVEN'T BEEN BACK HERE SINCE...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT--?
SHHH!
SUE, DEAR-- I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT AN OLD CAMPUS TRADITION I STILL REMEMBER FROM MY DAYS AT STATE...

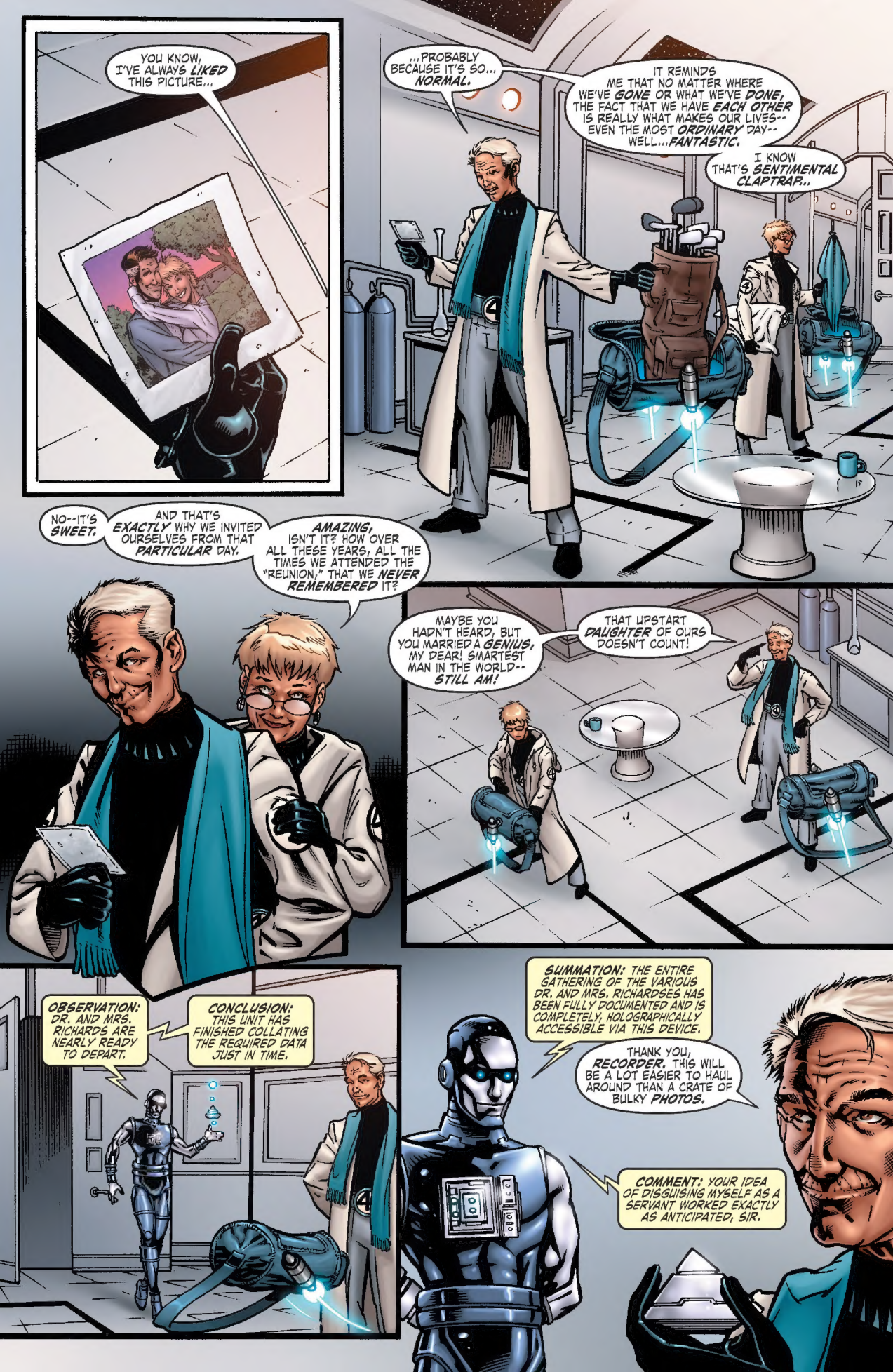
INVISIBLE, EVERYONE! BEST THEY NOT KNOW WE'RE HERE!
I'D LOVE TO LEARN IT, REED!
SEE THAT TREE--IN THE SHAPE OF A HEART?
OH, YES! IT'S LOVELY!
WELL, ACCORDING TO TRADITION, ANY COUPLE WHO HOLD HANDS AND KISS WHILE STANDING BEFORE IT WILL MARRY WITHIN A YEAR.
REED, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU...TO TAKE MY HAND.
SUE! YOU MEAN--YOU FEEL ABOUT ME THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU?
I'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT WAY, REED. PERHAPS I NEVER FULLY REALIZED IT UNTIL NOW, BUT...IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOU!
WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT--FOR THE FIRST TIME, MY LEGS ACTUALLY FEEL RUBBERY!
I...I HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THE OLD TRADITION--BUT I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THIS TO CHANCE, EITHER!
THIS IS MY GRANDMOTHER'S ENGAGEMENT RING...AND NOTHING WOULD MAKE ME HAPPIER THAN IF YOU WOULD WEAR IT, SUE. I WANT US TO SHARE MORE THAN JUST A LIFETIME OF ADVENTURE--I WANT US TO SHARE THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!
SUSAN STORM...WILL YOU MARRY ME?
WILL YOU BE MY WIFE?

OF COURSE, DARLING!
FOR NOW... AND FOREVER!

COME ON-- LET'S TELL BEN AND JOHNNY!
BEN AND JOHNNY? I WANT TO TELL THE WORLD!
YES, THAT WAS A BIG DAY FOR ME... FOR US.
COME TO THINK OF IT, ALL THE COUPLES HERE ARE FROM IMPORTANT MOMENTS IN OUR LIVES... EXCEPT OURSELVES. WHY WERE WE INVITED...?
YOU DON'T KNOW, REED? WHY, IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT--
EXCUSE ME! IF I COULD INTERRUPT ONCE MORE--ONE LAST TIME...
COULD EVERYONE PLEASE GET A DRINK TO MAKE A TOAST? IT'S NON-ALCOHOLIC, SO EXPECTANT MOMS NEEDN'T WORRY!
NOW, I KNOW HALF OF YOU THINK YOU'RE TWICE AS SMART AS ANYONE ELSE, AND THE OTHER HALF IS TWICE AS SMART AS THEY LET ANYONE THINK!
SO IF YOU'VE DONE THE MATH, YOU'VE PROBABLY ALREADY FIGURED OUT IT WAS GRANDMA AND ME WHO ARRANGED THIS LITTLE GET-TOGETHER...
...IN HONOR OF OUR 40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

WE'RE ABOUT TO LEAVE ON ONE MORE GRAND ADVENTURE. WE DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHERE IT'LL TAKE US...AND WE DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHEN WE'LL RETURN.
IT'S LIKE RETIRING TO FLORIDA--IN 1492, WHEN FLORIDA WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD AND NOTHING WAS KNOWN ABOUT IT!
SO BEFORE MOVING ON, WE WANTED ONE LAST LOOK BACK. WE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE HERE WITHOUT YOU!
WE'VE SHARED A LIFE OF ASTONISHING SIGHTS AND UNBELIEVABLE EXPERIENCES--AND A LOVE MORE INCREDIBLE THAN EVERYTHING ELSE COMBINED!
THANK YOU ALL FOR THE MOST WONDERFUL LIFE...
...THE LIFE FANTASTIC!
YOU TWO AREN'T DRINKING?
OH, THIS GATHERING IS INTOXICATING ENOUGH!
NON-ALCOHOLIC, YOU SAID? BUT I ALREADY FEEL LIGHT-HEADED. WHAT IS THIS?
OH, IT'S JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING WE PICKED UP ON A RECENT TRIP...
...TO THE RIVER OF FORGETFULNESS...

EXCELLENT MEAL.
MMM...
NICE TO GET OUT. GET AWAY. HAVE SOME TIME WITH EACH OTHER.
IT'S NEVER ENOUGH, IS IT? EVEN IF WE'RE TOGETHER TWENTY, THIRTY, FORTY YEARS, I'LL ALWAYS WANT MORE TIME WITH YOU.
YES. I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MOMENTS LIKE THIS AND LIVE EACH DAY AS IF IT WERE OUR LAST.
NO...
...AS IF IT WERE OUR FIRST!
'SCUZE ME-- TAKE YOUR PICTURE? NICE COUPLE LIKE YOU, SOMETHING TO REMEMBER THIS EVENING BY?
FIVE BUCKS.
OH, I DON'T--
--SEE WHY NOT.
KLIK


YOU KNOW, I'VE ALWAYS LIKED THIS PICTURE...
...PROBABLY BECAUSE IT'S SO... NORMAL.
IT REMINDS ME THAT NO MATTER WHERE WE'VE GONE OR WHAT WE'VE DONE, THE FACT THAT WE HAVE EACH OTHER IS REALLY WHAT MAKES OUR LIVES-- EVEN THE MOST ORDINARY DAY-- WELL...FANTASTIC.
I KNOW THAT'S SENTIMENTAL CLAPTRAP...
NO--IT'S SWEET.
AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY WE INVITED OURSELVES FROM THAT PARTICULAR DAY.
AMAZING, ISN'T IT? HOW OVER ALL THESE YEARS, ALL THE TIMES WE ATTENDED THE "REUNION," THAT WE NEVER REMEMBERED IT?
MAYBE YOU HADN'T HEARD, BUT YOU MARRIED A GENIUS, MY DEAR! SMARTEST MAN IN THE WORLD-- STILL AM!
THAT UPSTART DAUGHTER OF OURS DOESN'T COUNT!
OBSERVATION: DR. AND MRS. RICHARDS ARE NEARLY READY TO DEPART.
CONCLUSION: THIS UNIT HAS FINISHED COLLATING THE REQUIRED DATA JUST IN TIME.
SUMMATION: THE ENTIRE GATHERING OF THE VARIOUS DR. AND MRS. RICHARDSES HAS BEEN FULLY DOCUMENTED AND IS COMPLETELY, HOLOGRAPHICALLY ACCESSIBLE VIA THIS DEVICE.
THANK YOU, RECORDER. THIS WILL BE A LOT EASIER TO HAUL AROUND THAN A CRATE OF BULKY PHOTOS.
COMMENT: YOUR IDEA OF DISGUISING MYSELF AS A SERVANT WORKED EXACTLY AS ANTICIPATED, SIR.

YES, WELL...I KNOW HOW PEOPLE GET WHEN THEY KNOW THEY'RE ON CAMERA.
I KNOW HOW YOU GET!
READY?
ME? I'M WAITING FOR YOU!
THEN SHOW ME SOMETHING, REED... SOMETHING NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN BEFORE!
MY WORD, WOMAN--YOU DON'T WANT MUCH!
LUCKILY, I'M JUST THE MAN FOR YOU!

The Life Fantastic

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END

Shadowcat